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A Warrior in the Arms Control Trenches

David Sullivan, a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst, is called "Mad Dog" by his friends. He's a pivotal power in the fight over the MX missile and U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations. The story of Sullivan's rise to influence is a case history of the way things work in Washington.

Educated at Harvard, Sullivan served in Marine Corps combat intelligence in Vietnam and eventually wound up in one of the CIA's most sensitive jobs: analyzing Soviet strategy and nuclear force modernization. He soon discovered that the Soviets were violating SALT I and other treaties with the United States.

But when Sullivan presented his evidence, he was stonewalled by agency higher-ups. This was during the Carter administration, which did not want evidence of Soviet violations of SALT I endangering President Carter's attempts to negotiate the SALT II agreement.

Frustrated, Sullivan delivered his report on Soviet violations to a sympathetic congressional aide, Richard N. Perle. Realizing that his days in the CIA were numbered, Sullivan quit and went to work for Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.). When Ronald Reagan became president, Sullivan was given a top post at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. His friend Perle became a high official at the Defense Department.

Sullivan's pursuit of Soviet violations guaranteed that his tenure at the ACDA would be brief. Frustrated once more, he left for the more sympathetic environment of Capitol Hill, becoming a senior policy adviser to four conservative GOP senators, Steve Symms and James A. McClure of Idaho, and Jesse Helms and John P. East of North Carolina.

In this capacity, Sullivan has ghost-written a series of letters from the four to their Senate colleagues, President Reagan, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and CIA Director William J. Casey, reminding them of Kremlin perfidy.

Surprisingly, the Reagan administration, while fulminating about the "Evil Empire," was reluctant to reveal information it had on Soviet arms-treaty violations. The White House finally did so in a secret report early last year.

Sullivan has become an irascible and influential wrench in the machinery of U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations. It is not just because he now has some committed ideological hard-liners backing him, it's because his early warnings on Soviet weapons development turned out to be dead accurate.

Even liberal critics concede that Sullivan is "brilliant" and an opponent to be reckoned with, though they claim—with some justice—that he occasionally stretches the facts to make a polemical point.

Sullivan's latest weapon is a book, "Soviet Military Supremacy: the Untold Facts About the New Danger to America," that will be published soon. His co-author is Quentin Crommelin, another conservative who served in the trenches of Capitol Hill. We've seen an advance copy, and, given the amount of intelligence information revealed in the book, it's surprising that the CIA cleared it for release.